

WI-34  
Handy Hall  
Salisbury vicinity (site)  
Private

c. 1860

Handy Hall stood on the north side of the Wicomico River approximately two miles west of Salisbury. The large two-story, seven-bay frame dwelling, built on the site of an earlier house, was erected by Milton A. Parsons around 1860. The distinct Greek Revival detailing across its long facade clearly points to the mid nineteenth-century estimation of age. Paneled pilasters trimmed the principal corners of the house, and a bold dentiled cornice stretched across its long facade. A similarly detailed front porch sheltered a classical entrance. The interior, according to descriptions written prior to its destruction, included a standard mid century staircase boldly turned newel posts and a series of turned balusters. Greek Revival mantel distinguished the parlors.

Construction of this impressive frame dwelling was accomplished by Milton A. Parsons (1826-1910), who inherited the "Handy Hall" farm from his father, Jehu Parsons in 1859. Jehu Parson's will conveyed many farms as well as valuable wharf and store properties in Salisbury. Milton A. Parsons is listed in the 1860 United States census as a wealthy 34-year old farmer whose real estate and personal worth was set at \$20,000. The farm encompassed 780 acres.

Following the ownership of Milton Parsons, the property passed into a long ownership of the Bell family. Ultimately the property fell into disrepair and by the early 1970s was abandoned.

## MARYLAND HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN INFORMATION

RESOURCE NAME: Handy Hall

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST INVENTORY NUMBER: WI-34

## MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DATA

1. Historic Period Theme(s): Architecture
2. Geographic Orientation: Eastern Shore
3. Chronological/Development Period(s): Agricultural-Industrial Transition  
1815-1870
4. Resource Type(s): Site

**Maryland Historical Trust  
State Historic Sites Inventory Form**

MARYLAND INVENTORY OF  
HISTORIC PROPERTIES

Survey No. WI-34

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☐ no

**1. Name** (indicate preferred name)

historic Handy Hall Jehu Parsons House

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number South side of Pemberton Drive ☐ not for publication

city, town Salisbury ☒ vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland county Wicomico

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property** (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name

street & number telephone no.:

city, town state and zip code

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wicomico County Clerk of Court liber

street & number Wicomico County Courthouse folio

city, town Salisbury state MD 21801

**6. Representation in Existing** Historical Surveys

title

date ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Survey No. WI-34

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☒ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☐ original site  
☐ moved      date of move \_\_\_\_\_

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Handy Hall was a large agricultural estate formerly located on the north side of the Wicomico River approximately two miles west of Salisbury, Wicomico County, Maryland. The large mid nineteenth-century Greek Revival frame house that served as the principal focus of the farm stood until the early to mid 1970s when it was demolished. The house faced southeast with the principal gable roof oriented on a northeast/southwest axis.

Estimated to date around 1860, the two-story, seven-bay frame house was supported on a parged brick foundation, and the exterior was clad with plain weatherboard siding. The main block as well as an adjacent kitchen wing, was covered with medium pitched gable roofs. According to a previous description on the property, an eighteenth-century outbuilding stood adjacent to the house.

The southeast (main) facade was an asymmetrical seven-bay facade. The five eastern bays comprised the main block while the two western bays constituted a two-story engaged porch. The five-bay wall of the house was traditionally designed with a center entrance and flanking six-over-six sash windows. Each window opening had a molded cornice and louvered shutters. The corners of the house were accented with paneled pilasters, and the base of the roof was finished with a boxed cornice trimmed with a bold dentiled bed molding. Sheltering the three center bays on the first floor was a hip roofed porch accented with a dentiled cornice. Rising through the gable roof were three brick stack finished with a variety of caps. The northeast gable end chimney had a corbelled cap, while a center chimney was topped by a Gothic arched flue cover. The east end chimney was deteriorated below the level of the cap.

Attached to the southwest gable end of the main block was a two-story, three-bay kitchen wing that supposedly rested on an eighteenth-century foundation. The kitchen wing was plainly finished. The boxed cornice was trimmed like the main block with a dentiled bed molding.

The former description of the interior states that the house was finished with a turned baluster mahogany and oak staircase in the center hall and plain classical mantels in the adjacent parlors.

# 8. Significance

Survey No. WI-34

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

## Specific dates

## Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D  
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Handy Hall stood on the north side of the Wicomico River approximately two miles west of Salisbury. The large two-story, seven-bay frame dwelling, built on the site of an earlier house, was erected by Milton A. Parsons around 1860. The distinct Greek Revival detailing across its long facade clearly points to the mid nineteenth-century estimation of age. Paneled pilasters trimmed the principal corners of the house, and a bold dentiled cornice stretched across its long facade. A similarly detailed front porch sheltered a classical entrance. The interior, according to descriptions written prior to its destruction, included a standard mid century staircase boldly turned newel posts and a series of turned balusters. Greek Revival mantel distinguished the parlors.

Construction of this impressive frame dwelling was accomplished by Milton A. Parsons (1826-1910), who inherited the "Handy Hall" farm from his father, Jehu Parsons in 1859.<sup>1</sup> Jehu Parson's will conveyed many farms as well as valuable wharf and store properties in Salisbury. Milton A. Parsons is listed in the 1860 United States census as a wealthy 34-year old farmer who real estate and personal worth was set at \$20,000.<sup>2</sup> The farm encompassed 780 acres.

<sup>1</sup> Somerset County Will Book, SCL 5/11, proved 16 August 1859.

<sup>2</sup> Eighth Census of the United States, Somerset County Population Schedule, transcribed by John C. Barnes, printed by Ruth T. Dryden, p. 210.



WI-34  
Handy Hall  
Salisbury vicinity (site)  
Chain of title

Mortgage  
SPT 4/464

Milton A. Parsons

to

3/20/1882

Henrietta H. Stewart

...all that tract or parcel of land lying and being in Wicomico County...whereon the said Milton A. now resides, it being all that tract called Handy Hall which was devised to the said Milton A. Parsons by his father Jehu Parsons deceased by his last will and testament...and is situated on the Wicomico River about two miles west of Salisbury containing 780 acres...and adjoining the lands of George W. Parsons, James Cannon, and others....

*Graveyards and Gravestones of Wicomico County*, Jehu Parsons, b. 11/6/1780  
John E. Jacob, 1997, p. 68. d. 8/8/1859

Somerset County  
Will Book  
SCL 5/11

Last Will and Testament of Jehu Parsons

Written  
11/16/1854  
Proved  
8/16/1859

Item: I give and devise to my daughter Juliet Amanda Toadvine (wife of Purnell Toadvine) in fee, all that farm lying in Worcester County near the town of Salisbury called "Castle Fine," all the granary & wharf & land lying at the west end of the old bridge, South of the county road leading from Salisbury to Spring Hill....

Item: I give and devise to my son Milton A. Parsons in fee simple the "Handy Hall" farm which I purchased of Samuel J. K. Handy & Betsy K. Handy....

(Note: In a later item Jehu Parsons conveys the farm on which he resided)

WI-34  
Handy Hall  
Salisbury vicinity (site)  
Chain of title continued

Page 2

Somerset County  
Land Record  
AH 524

Betsy K. Handy

to

4/22/1843

Jehu Parsons  
\$4,000 "Handy's Neck" which was devised the  
said Betsy by her husband William Handy, Sr., late  
of Somerset County, deceased

Somerset County  
Land Record  
AH 7

Samuel J. K. Handy  
Ann McKim Handy, City of Baltimore

to

12/2/1841

Jehu Parsons  
\$7,730 "Handy's Neck"

Somerset County  
Mortgage

Jehu Parsons

to

4/22/1840

Samuel J. K. Handy  
\$1,000 indebtedness "Handy's Neck" 773 acres

Somerset County  
Land Record  
GH 7/660

Thomas W. Handy  
Sarah Handy, New Castle County, Delaware

to

3/24/1835

Jehu Parsons  
\$2,500 "Pemberton," also a slip of land called  
"Surveyor's Mistake," "Friend's Choice,"  
"Partnership," "Shiles Folly," "Handy's Neck"



WI-34  
 Handy Hall  
 Salisbury vicinity (site)

Lake, Griffing, and Stevenson Atlas  
 1877



**SALISBURY**

Dist. No 9

MARYLAND  
OLOGICAL SURVEY

601  
EBRL

4.7 KM TO U. S. 50 '41

40' '42

EDEN QUADRANGLE  
MARYLAND  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES ORTHOPHOTOMAP (TOPO

'43 '44 1 990 000 FEET



WI-34

Survey  
1/14/72  
Handy Hall  
Wicomico Co.

Mrs. Burnett - Research not done on Handy Hall.

Original 18th century Handy Hall destroyed in the early 19th century. Owned by the same family as Pemberton Hall. George Handy was the builder of the 18th century house.

The house was sold c. 1835 to the Jehu Parsons family, then to his son (?) Milton Parsons.

In the 1900s, Parson sold it to Sam (?) Bell.

The current Handy Hall was built on the foundations of the old one by the Parsons family.

The kitchen end has rough hewn beams.

## Handy Hall

Handy Hall is a large long frame house, 2 storys in height, on a stuccoed brick foundation. At the corners of the white clapboard house are modern pilasters with insert panels reminiscent of the earlier Greek Revival style. Stylistically it is a combination of Greek Revival and Georgian design, Its period is ante-bellum.

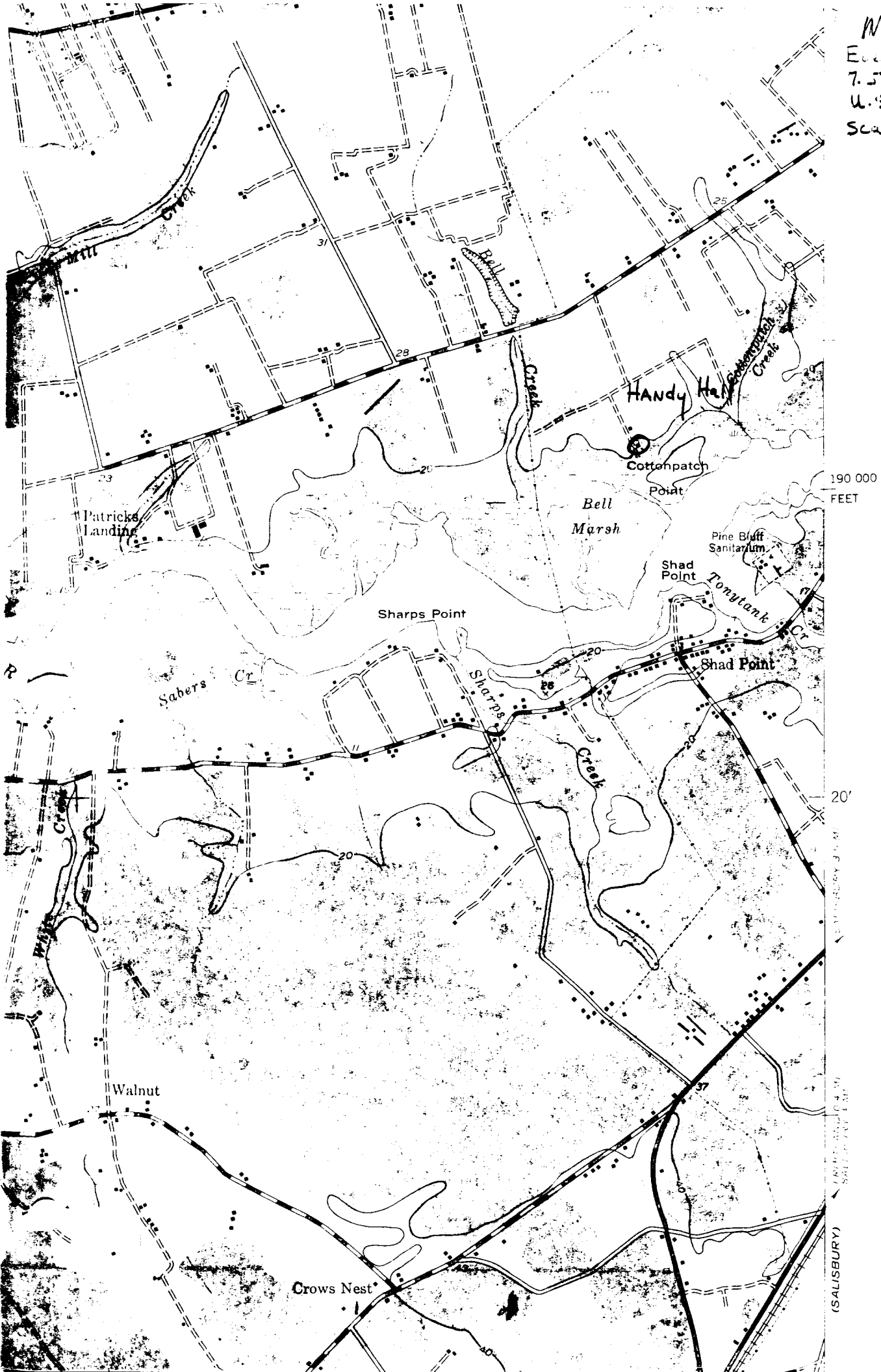
Handy Hall's southeast facade is the typical 5-bay long structure ~~xxxxxx~~ with central entrance. The door is flanked by sidelights and has a crude classic architecture. On the 2nd story is a three-part window. A one-story screened porch of the same period extends across the three center bays of the main facade. Its dentil cornice matches that of the kitchen wing. On the south ~~side~~ end beneath the same ~~xxxxxxxx~~ roof pitch is a small 2-story screened porch opening from the 2 adjoining rooms on each floor. Large dentils <sup>Form</sup> ~~from~~ the cornice of the facade. On the <sup>North</sup> N.W. <sup>End</sup>, the roof is symmetrical above the northeast rooms, but asymmetrical over the remainder of the main section due to an additional depth of room. Part of the building behind the stairhall ~~x~~ has been altered and increased in size, as can be traced in the roof structure and cornice.

~~Set~~ Set back the depth of the south corner porch is the 3 bay 2-story frame kitchen wing which stands on an earlier basement. A one-story 20th Century addition connects the kitchen and an 18th century outbuilding.

The outbuilding is an unusual structure as it stands on a tall brick basement. One original side, protected by an addition, exists of board and battens fastened with wrought nails. Parts of an old wooden vice are extant in a work-bench within the building.

The floor plan<sup>6</sup> of the house consists of a central stair hall with parlor on the northeast and 2 rooms on the southwest. Another room is located between the original kitchen wing and the west rear room, aforesaid. The same floor plan is used in the 2nd story with slight variations. Three main rooms of the 1st story and the master bedroom on the second story have fireplaces with simple classical mantels. The interior is otherwise very plain. The stair is composed of walnut handrail, oak turned balusters and huge newel typical of the Ante-bellum period.

W1 - 39  
Evergreen  
7.5 Minute Map  
U.S.G.S.  
Scale - 1:24000





Handy Hall

W1-34

W34





w1-34

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